

Message Text

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52

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-12

DPW-01 OMB-01 AID-20 RSR-01 /116 W

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R 061005 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9754

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5806

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS VS CB

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN MONK ASSASSINATED IN BAC LIEU

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO BEING REPEATED:

QUOTE

CAN THO 0133

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, VS, CB

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN MONK ASSASSINATED IN BAC LIEU

SUMMARY: A LEADING BAC LIEU CAMBODIAN MONK WAS MURDERED ON APRIL 3.

THE SAME DAY A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION WAS GRENADED WITH FURTHER

LOSS

OF LIFE. FOR THE MOMENT LOCAL CAMBODIANS ARE BLAMING THE GVN FOR

THE INCIDENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. UNKNOWN PERSONS ASSASSINATED AN INFLUENTIAL KHEMARANIKAY MONK AND A PF SOLDIER APRIL 3 BETWEEN 1600 AND 1700 HOURS. THE TWO WERE RETURNING BY HONDA TO A PAGODA IN VINH TRACH VILLAGE, VINH CHAU DISTRICT. LOCAL PEOPLE SAID THAT FIVE INDIVIDUALS FLED THE AREA TOWARD BAC LIEU SOON AFTER THE INCIDENT OCCURRED. SOME SAY THE FIVE WORE CIVILIAN CLOTHES BUT OTHERS CLAIM THEY WERE PF SOLDIERS STATIONED IN THE VILLAGE.

2. WITHIN THREE HOURS OF THE ASSASSINATION SOME 100 CAMBODIAN PSDF AND MONKS GATHERED IN FRONT OF THE VINH TRACH VILLAGE OFFICE TO PROTEST THE INCIDENT. A GROUP OF GVN OFFICIALS WAS STANDING IN
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FRONT OF THE OFFICE WHEN HAND GRENADE WAS THROWN FROM THE VICINITY OF THE CAMBODIAN DEMONSTRATORS, KILLING THE DEPUTY VILLAGE CHIEF FOR ADMINISTRATION AND A HAMLET CHIEF, AND WOUNDING FIVE PF, FIVE POLICEMEN, ONE VIS CADRE AND AN OUTPOST COMMANDER'S WIFE. THE PROVINCE CHIEF DROVE TO THE VILLAGE AT 2300 HOURS, AN UNUSUAL HOUR FOR ROAD TRAVEL IN BAC LIEU.

3. A GROUP OF CAMBODIANS GATHERED APRIL 4 AT THE SITE OF THE ASSASSINATION, ON A ROAD ABOUT THREE KILOMETERS FROM THE VILLAGE OFFICE, AND THREATENED TO LEAVE THE BODIES AT THE SITE AND CREMATE THEM THERE UNLESS THE CULPRITS WERE APPREHENDED.

4. CAMBODIAN LEADERS IN SAIGON AND BA XUYEN HAD BEEN NOTIFIED BY APRIL 5 AND OFFICIALS EXPECTED DEMONSTRATORS FROM OTHER PARTS OF BAC

LIEU TO ARRIVE AT THE SCENE THE SAME DAY. APPROXIMATELY 500 DEMONSTRATING MONKS PASSED PROVINCE HEADQUARTERS BEARING THE BODIES TO THE BAC LIEU PAGODA AT ABOUT 1200 HOURS, APRIL 5. THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY THE PROVINCE CHIEF AND HIS CHIEF OF STAFF. THE MARCHERS WERE PEACEFUL ALTHOUGH THE RIOT POLICE CAUSED A SCARE WHEN THEY ARRIVED. THE PROVINCE CHIEF SOON ORDERED THEM AWAY AND THE MARCH CONTINUED.

5. COMMENT: THE ASSASSINATED MONK, SON THAN, WAS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CAMBODIAN MONKS IN BAC LIEU. HE WAS A HIGHLY EDUCATED MAN WHO SPOKE VIETNAMESE, KHMER, ENGLISH, AND FRENCH. AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH HE WAS PROFESSOR OF BUDDHISM IN THE PREY CHOP PAGODA RUN BY THE DEPUTY HEAD OF KHEMARANIKAY BUDDHISM IN BAC LIEU. SON THAN, A NOTED MAVERICK AND CHAMPION OF CAMBODIAN RIGHTS, BELONGED

TO NEITHER THE KHEMARANIKAY NOR THE THERAVADA SECTS BUT MAINTAINED GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH. HE CAME TO PROMINENCE DURING POLICE ROUNDUPS OF DRAFT DODGERS IN 1973 WHEN HE REFUSED TO ALLOW THE POLICE TO ENTER THE PREY CHOP PAGODA.

6. WHILE WE DO NOT KNOW WHO ASSASSINATED THE MONK OR WHO THREW THE

GRENADE AT THE VILLAGE OFFICE, OUR DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE IN BAC LIEU REPORTS THE LOCAL POPULATION DOES NOT BELIEVE THE VC WERE INVOLVED. THE SECTOR S-2 ATTRIBUTED THE INCIDENT TO THE VC BUT US OFFICIALS ON THE SCENE SAID THAT HE DID SO WITH SOME EM-BARRASSMENT. BARNES UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

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